

ELA: Grade 7, Lesson 4 Early American Civilizations

Lesson Focus: Early American Civilizations

Lesson Objective: Today we will understand how the Mayan civilization was organized and how that organization supported the development of the Maya golden age throughout a very large, diverse region.

TN Standards: 7.RI.KID.1, 7.RI.KID.2, 7.RI.KID.3

Teacher Materials:

- 3-column chart from previous lessons

Student Materials:

- A piece of paper
- Pencil or pen
- 3 column chart from previous lesson

Teacher Do	Student Do
<p><u>Opening</u></p> <p>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 7th graders out there, though all children are welcome to tune in. This lesson is the fourth in our series.</p> <p>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools! I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</p> <p>Today we will be learning about Early American Civilizations! Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Something to write with and a surface to write on• A piece of paper• The 3 column chart that we have been working with in this lesson series <p>If you didn't see our previous lesson, you can find it at www.tn.gov/education. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't seen any of our others. But, it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons since we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</p> <p>Ok, let's begin!</p>	<p>Students listen and review their own copies of note-taker created in Lesson 3.</p>
<p><u>Intro</u></p> <p>Today we are continuing our focus on the Mayan civilization. Let's review what we wrote on our 3-column chart in the last lesson about the Mayans.</p> <p>[Hold up the 3-column chart from lessons 1 and 2 and review entries just about the Mayans.]</p>	

<p>We wrote facts about the organization of Mayan society, Mayan religion, and Mayan trade.</p> <p>Today we will continue reading the “Golden Age of the Maya” and learn more about how the Maya civilization was organized.</p> <p>Remember, the big question we want to answer is: How did Maya society adapt and thrive in such a large and diverse region?</p>	
<p><u>Teacher Model</u></p> <p>Now I will read the next section in our text to you. Please listen carefully as I read and think about the answer to our big question.</p> <p>Read aloud the text below:</p> <p>Feeding City-States: Wetlands, Mountains, and Rainforests</p> <p>Maya farmers worked hard to supply food to the city-states. Rainfall and soil quality varied throughout Mesoamerica. The Maya found clever ways to meet the challenges of their diverse landscapes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this mean that soil quality varied throughout Mesoamerica? (Pause) The soil was different in different parts of Mesoamerica. • So, were all of the Maya farmers able to do the same things to be successful? No. • Then the author tells us “The Maya found clever ways to meet the challenges of their diverse landscapes.” What does this tell us? [Pause] Because the landscapes were diverse, or different, each farmer had to come up with different ways to overcome challenges and be successful. <p>Let’s read further to see what kinds of challenges the farmers faced and what clever things they did to overcome them.</p> <p>Some lowland areas received heavy rains from May through December, followed by drought from January through April. Because of this inconsistent rainfall, the Maya developed ways of redirecting and reusing rainwater. They created canals in the lowlands. They built raised-earth platforms above the canals and created wetlands. Aquatic plants helped keep the water clean and provided shade for the fish in the canals. The fish, in turn, provided both food and fertilizer for the fields.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was one challenge some Maya farmers had to overcome? [Pause] The rainfall was inconsistent. 	<p>Students listen to read aloud.</p> <p>Students pause to reflect and add to their 3 column chart when directed by teacher.</p>

Sometimes they had heavy rains, while other times they had droughts.

- Why would this pose a problem for farmers? [Pause] Too much or too little water would make it hard for their crops to grow. Take a moment to add this challenge to your chart in the Maya column.
- What did they do to overcome this challenge? [Pause] They found ways to redirect and reuse rainwater and created canals in the lowlands. Let's add these as solutions to this challenge. [Model filling in your chart]

In highland areas, the Maya cut terraces into the slopes of mountains. They practiced multi-cropping on this flat land, planting and harvesting the land multiple times throughout the year. Their crops included beans, tomatoes, squash, chili peppers, and pumpkins. Maize, or corn, was the main food throughout Mesoamerica.

- I think we can all agree it would be challenging to farm in the mountain areas. Let's add this to our chart as another challenge they faced. [Model filling in your chart]
- What did the Maya do? [Pause] They cut terraces, or flat areas into the slopes of the mountains. This made it much easier to plant crops. Let's add this to our chart to capture how they overcame the challenge of farming in the highland areas.
- They also did something else called multi-cropping. What did this allow them to do? I'll reread this section so you can listen for the answer to this. They practiced multi-cropping on this flat land, planting and harvesting the land multiple times throughout the year. [Pause] This allowed them to plant multiple things throughout the year. They did not just plant one crop for the year and then wait for the next year to replant. Once they harvested one crop they planted something else. This allowed them to increase the amount of food they could grow in these areas.

In forested areas, the Maya used a technique known as slash and burn. They slashed, or cut down, trees and then burned the area. Then they planted new crops. Ashes left from the fire added nutrients to the soil. After several years, the crops used up the nutrients in the soil. The Maya then repeated the process in another area.

- **What do the crops do to the nutrients in the soil over time?** [Pause] **After several years, the crops used up nutrients in the soil.**
- **Why would this create a challenge for farmers?** [Pause] **After a while, the crops would have difficulty growing in the soil if the nutrients were depleted.**
- **What was their solution to this challenge?** [Pause] **They used a method known as slash and burn. They cut down the trees in an area and burned them.**
- **How did this help solve their issue?** [Pause] **The ashes added nutrients to the soil.**
- **What happened after they planted in that area for several years?** [Pause] **The nutrients would be depleted, so they would move on to another area and repeat the slash and burn method.**
- **Take a moment to add additional things Maya farmers did to overcome living in diverse landscapes.** [Model filling in your chart: slash and burn method to add nutrients to soil; multi-cropping;].

The Maya also gathered tree crops. Fruit trees thrived in the rainforest. The Maya enjoyed the bountiful fruit of the breadnut tree. Similar to apricots in appearance, breadnut fruit has highly nutritious seeds. The Maya ate these seeds or ground them into flour.

The Maya also used many rainforest plants for medicine. Some Maya hunted game in the forests, including deer, rabbits, and other small mammals. They raised turkeys and dogs for food. They raised stingless bees for honey, which they used to sweeten foods and drinks.

In coastal communities, the Maya ate fish and turtles as well. It is important to remember that the

- **How else did the Maya use the diverse land to survive and thrive?** [Pause] **They used plants in the rainforest for medicine, hunted game, raised turkeys and dogs for food, and raised bees for honey.**
- **Take a moment to add to your chart.** [Model filling in your chart: Ways they used land: used plants for medicine; hunted game; raised animals for food; raised bees for honey].

Maya were not the first civilization to live in Mesoamerica. The way they lived was often very similar to the way others in the area lived. The Maya did not invent the pyramid, nor

were they the first to practice writing. Instead, the Maya often improved upon practices originally borrowed from other cultures.

- This is an important place to stop and think about what the author just said. Were the Maya the first civilization? [Pause] No, they were not.
- Did they invent the pyramid or were they the first to practice writing? [Pause] No, they were not the first to do these things.
- What did they do that is important to note? [Pause] They improved upon practices they borrowed from other cultures.
- Let's take a moment to add this important idea to your chart. [Model filling in your chart: improved upon practices borrowed from other cultures].

An Important Ball Game

The Maya played a ball game called pok-a-tok that had religious significance. Nearly every Maya city had at least one ball court. Enclosed by parallel walls, the rectangular courts varied in size. Some were nearly as large as a modern-day football field. The game of pok-a-tok was played with a solid rubber ball that weighed as much as eight pounds. Players kept the ball in the air with their knees, hips, shoulders, and forearms. Thick, heavy padding protected them in this fast-paced game. Rules varied among the city-states. At Chichén Itzá's court, the object was to pass the ball through stone hoops. In some city-states, players were sacrificed to the gods at the end of the game. It's possible that the game symbolized the passage of the sun across the sky. This was believed to be an important daily task performed by the gods.

Isn't it interesting that the Maya played ball like we do! Pok-a-tok! Think about how this is similar to and different from the way we play football today.

- What did they Maya believe the game symbolized? [Pause] The passage of the sun across the sky.
- The text says that in some cities, something could happen to players at the end of the game. Can you remember what could happen? [Pause] Right. This is

<p>kind hard to believe, but they sometimes were sacrificed to the gods! That’s definitely a tradition that belongs in the past.</p> <p>Read aloud</p> <p>Life in a Royal Court</p> <p>This mural was painted on a temple wall at Bonampak in southern Mexico. It shows that members of the king’s royal court lived lives of luxury. Rulers grew wealthy from trade among city-states. The mural depicts how members of the royal court lived and dressed. Loose-fitting clothing was typical of all social classes. Noble women wore beads, pendants, and earrings made of precious jade. Noble men covered their heads with feathered headdresses made of quetzal plumes. Only the rich and powerful wore fancy clothes and jewels.</p> <p>The author states that only the rich and powerful wore fancy clothes and jewels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the text, what aspects of the nobles’ dress could be described as fancy? [Pause] Some of the answers I thought of were beads, pendants, and earrings; feathered headdresses; and the inclusion of precious jade and quetzal plumes. Did you think of any I left out? 	
<p><u>Guided Practice</u></p> <p><u>Word Work</u></p> <p>Now let’s do some Word Work. In the chapter you read,</p> <p>“Some Maya hunted game in the forests, including deer, rabbits, and other small mammals.” Say the word <u>game</u> with me. In this sentence, game means animals that are hunted. The word <u>game</u> is also used in another way in this chapter.</p> <p>The text says, “The Maya played a ball game called pok-a-tok that had religious significance.”</p> <p>In this sentence, game means an activity done for pleasure or sport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What part of speech is the word game? [Pause] Yes, a noun. 	<p>Students listen to read aloud and orally answer questions posed by teacher.</p>

The word game is a word with multiple meanings.

Meaning #1: game—animals that are hunted

Meaning #2: game—an activity done for pleasure or sport

I am going to read several sentences. Listen to the context, or the text surrounding the game in the sentence, for clues as to which meaning is being used.

- Number 1-6 on a sheet of paper.
- When you think a sentence is an example of Meaning #1- animals that are hunted, write 1.
- When you think a sentence is an example of Meaning #2- an activity done for pleasure or sport write 2.

1. Pok-a-tok is a game the Maya played.
2. Fish and turtles were common game the coastal Maya enjoyed.
3. Soccer is a popular game around the world.
4. Deer and rabbits are game on many of the world's continents.
5. Mice and birds are game that foxes eat.
6. Chess is a type of game played with a board.

Now let's check your work.

1. A Pok-a-tok is a game the Maya played. This game would be an activity done for pleasure, so the answer would be 2.
2. Fish and turtle were common game the coastal Maya enjoyed. The game in this sentence would be referring to the fish and turtles that could be hunted by the Maya. This would match meaning number one.
3. Soccer is a popular game around the world. Soccer would match with meaning number 2, an activity done for pleasure.
4. Deer and rabbits are game on many of the world's continents. The kind of game this sentence is referring to would be the animals, deer and rabbits, that are hunted. So the answer for this one is 1.
5. Mice and birds are game that foxes eat. This would also refer to meaning number 1. The mice and birds game, animals that are hunted.

Student answers

<p>6. Chess is a type of game played with a board. In this sentence, chess is an activity done for pleasure. So the answer to number six, is 2.</p>	
<p><u>Independent Practice</u> So, today we wanted to understand how the Maya civilization was organized and how that organization supported the development of the Maya golden age throughout a very large, diverse region.</p> <p>Our big question was: How did Maya society adapt and thrive in such a large and diverse region?</p> <p>On a new piece of paper, write the following three questions on your paper. I want you to answer them and be ready to review your answers when we meet for lesson 5. [Read slowly and repeat to give students the time to write on their paper.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did geography affect the ways Maya grew and hunted for food? • Because we just learned about a number of clever ways that the Maya people met the challenges of their diverse landscapes in order to provide food for themselves, which method or solution do you think was the <u>most</u> clever? • What evidence supports the title of this Chapter, Golden Age of the Maya? <p>Before you begin answering, give yourself some time to think about all the things you've learned today and from previous lessons. I know you're going to do a great job.</p>	<p>Students answer short answer questions.</p>
<p><u>Closing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoyed learning about Ancient Civilizations with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in our next lesson in Tennessee's At Home Learning Series! • Bye! 	

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